

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 09478 102216Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
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INFO ZEN/ALL USCONS IN MEXICO BY POUCH

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MX, SHUM
SUBJECT: MEXICAN COMMUNISTS ADVOCATE POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION FOR CLERGY

1. THE MEXICAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCM) HAS CREATED A MINOR
POLITICAL FLURRY HERE BY PUBLICLY ADVOCATING THE LIFTING
OF CONSTITUTIONAL PROHIBITIONS ON THE POLITICAL PARTICI-
PATION BY THE MEXICAN CLERGY. THE PCM SET FORTH ITS
POSITION IN ITS JUNE 2 TESTIMONY BEFORE THE FEDERAL
ELECTORAL COMMISSION, WHICH IS CONDUCTING PUBLIC HEARINGS
ON THE GOM'S PROPOSED POLITICAL REFORM.

2. REACTION TO THE IDEA HAS BEEN MOSTLY, THOUGH NOT
ENTIRELY, NEGATIVE. INTERIOR SECRETARY JESUS REYES
HEROLES, PRESUMABLY SPEAKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND LIKE-
WISE PRESUMABLY SETTling THE ISSUE, SAID MODIFYING THE
CHURCH-STATE RELATIONSHIP WOULD BE POLITICALLY RISKY,
UNNECESSARY, NEGATIVE, AND ANTI-HISTORIC. GOM/PRI SUP-
PORTERS HAD EITHER ALREADY TAKEN A SIMILAR POSITION OR
QUICKLY FOLLOWED SUIT. MEXICAN PRESS ALMOST UNIFORMLY
OPPOSED IDEA.

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PAGE 02 MEXICO 09478 102216Z

3. WHILE DENYING THAT THE CHURCH WOULD EVER WANT TO
CONTEST POLITICAL POWER ITSELF, THE MEXICAN EPISCOPADO
IN AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT FAVORED RESTORING THE RIGHT
TO VOTE TO THE CLERGY (IT WAS DENIED THEM BY ARTICLE
130 OF 1917 CONSTITUTION). RESTORING THE VOTE WOULD BE
"SIMPLY TO RECOGNIZE A NATURAL RIGHT WE HAVE."
OPPOSITION PARTY OF NATIONAL ACTION (PAN) MEMBERS

CAUTIOUSLY FAVORED THE SUGGESTION, WHILE APPEARING TO WONDER HOW THEY COULD BE CAUGHT ON THE SAME SIDE WITH THE PCM.

4. COMMENT:

THE PCM ADVOCATED IN THE SAME STATEMENT LIFTING PROHIBITIONS ON MILITARY PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS (MILITARY ON ACTIVE DUTY ARE FORBIDDEN FROM HOLDING PUBLIC OFFICE), WHICH HAS VIRTUALLY ESCAPED NOTICE.

5. MOST OBSERVERS HERE FEEL THE PCM OBJECTIVE IS TO MITIGATE CHURCH HOSTILITY TO THE PCM AND TO FREE THE WAY FOR MORE ACTIVE AND LEGAL PARTICIPATION BY A HANDFUL OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS SCATTERED AROUND COUNTRY WHO ALREADY SUPPORT PCM CAUSES AND LEFTIST BACKED MOVEMENTS - AT SOME RISK, ONE SUCH PRIEST WAS RECENTLY MURDERED IN CHIHUAHUA STATE CAPITAL. AMONG MEXICAN CLERGY THE ONLY ONE WHO PRESENTLY FLAUNTS THE POLITICAL PROHIBITION WITH IMPUNITY IS CUERNAVACA'S MAVERICK "RED BISHOP", SERGIO MENDEZ ARCEO.

6. BROADER PCM OBJECTIVES PROBABLY ARE TO ATTRACT PUBLIC ATTENTION TO ITSELF, TO EXPAND DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL REFORM TO MATTERS BEYOND MERE ELECTORAL REFORM, AND TO PROMPT PUBLIC INTEREST, LARGELY LACKING HERETOFORE, IN THE POLITICAL REFORM ENDEAVOR. THOMPSON

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